

# **Needham Human Rights Committee Minutes**

**February 27, 2014 7:30 PM**

## **Broadmeadow School Conference Room**

Present: Marlene Schultz, Amelia Klein, John Schlittler, Ashok Mehta, Cynthia Ganung, Abdul Cader Asmal, Olly Harari, Michael Vaughn, Nathan Rosin

Recorder: Nathan Rosin

1. **Minutes** of the January 16, 2014 meeting were approved
2. **Old Business**

### **Committee Membership**

There were three sign-ups on the NHRC sign-up sheet at the MLK Day celebration on January 20, 2013. The committee has heard back from one, who was planning to attend this meeting, but did not show up. The "Chinese Friends of Needham" has a new president, Jenny Gao. Betty Chan, of Newton, head of an Asian-American organization that includes Needham, invited people to attend the Chinese New Years celebration that took place at Needham High School on Feb. 22. Amelia will contact the *Chinese Friends of Needham* president as a new opportunity for recruitment to the committee.

Cynthia (as a representative of the Immigration Justice Task Force) will meet with Penny Kirk and Debra Guyot, new executive director of the Needham Housing Authority, to talk about welcoming immigrants to our community. She will also lay the groundwork for future contact with the Housing Authority to see if there are any residents interested in joining the HRC. Committee vacancies including the NHRC has appeared in the Needham Times and Hometown Weekly and is another opportunity that may bring in new potential members. There is also a contact at Olin College, whom some members of the committee have met with, who may potentially put the committee in touch with students interested in joining or collaborating.

Nathan will further investigate options at the high school for other students (preferable juniors and younger) who might be interested in joining the committee. There is a possibility of a METCO student interested in joining the committee. The committee will find out if people who attend school in Needham but do not live in Needham are eligible for membership on the committee. There is also the possibility of this student serving in the form of a "permanent guest." Finally, the committee's connections with the town public schools were discussed. There was a general consensus to try to maintain an official connection with the schools, as well as possibly begin to foster informal connections with student-run clubs and groups that focus on wellness, human rights, equality, and other similar topics.

### **Webpage**

There is a possibility of adding more information to the NHRC website. Members discussed the advantages of adding information about past events, including photographs and posters. This information may be added to the website in the form of an archive. Ashok can scan

photographs and posters onto the computer for them to be posted on the website, and Sandy Cincotta can add the pictures to the website itself.

Twitter and Facebook pages were also discussed as options for more online publicity. Nathan will put together a page to be presented to the committee at the next meeting. It can be reviewed and the committee can decide whether it wants to have a Facebook page or not.

### **Library “Created Equal” Event Series**

Members of the NHRC have volunteered to be NHRC ambassadors to the events in the series. Different members will attend different nights as representatives of the committee and as spectators and participants in the events. The event’s official publicity poster was passed around for all committee members to see. The NHRC supports the library in its efforts to organize this event series. The committee discussed whether there are other ways to view the films shown during the events if one cannot attend the event itself. It was mentioned that access to such videos was somewhere online, though it was unclear where these links may be. Members agreed it would be advantageous to have access to the videos online, should members be unable to attend the showings, but interested in participating in the discussions.

### **NHRC Event**

The event will be focused on the rights of senior citizens. It is possible that the committee may invite Catrin Lynch from Olin College to speak at the event. Ms. Lynch is the author of a book and the creator of a documentary. Her book focuses on issues of aging and self-purpose. Some of her work examines a Needham needle factory and the work of senior citizens at the factory.

Some members of the committee were inclined to focus the event on the abuse of elders and the rights of elders. There may be an option to co-sponsor the program with a the Needham Council on Aging. The co-chairs will meet with Jamie Gutner on March 10, 2014 to discuss how the Council on Aging may be involved in the event. Jamie may be able to suggest potential panelists.

It is still unclear whether the NHRC will be able to use the new Senior Center for the event location. The date for the event has not been set. The committee will wait to hear from the co-chairs about their meeting with Jamie Gutner before deciding when the event will take place and what it will look like. The co-chairs will report back about their meeting during the next scheduled NHRC meeting. The committee has expressed an interest in a target audience of seniors as well as family members.

## **3. Reports**

### **MLK Day Event**

The committee thanks Cynthia for her work on the MLK Day planning committee. There was very high praise for the event. There was especially positive feedback on the children’s choir from the temple and the METCO program. It was acknowledged that timing for an event like this is very hard to control strictly.

It was asked that more members of the NHRC join the MLK Day planning committee as representatives of the NHRC. At this point, it was also acknowledged that the Diversity Summit planning committee and the MLK Day planning committee might join forces.

### **Diversity Summit**

Amelia and Nathan reported to the committee the events of the most recent Diversity Summit planning meeting. At that meeting, a group from Wellesley called “World of Wellesley” visited the committee to share the work that they do in their town. Their sharing inspired an idea of possible collaboration between different groups around our town. There may be a possibility of finding groups with similar missions (like the NHRC, Diversity Summit Committee, MLK Day committee, etc.) and having them work together to form some sort of collaborative effort. It is still unclear what this effort may look like.

The next Diversity Summit has not yet been scheduled, but the committee is looking at either October 18<sup>th</sup> or October 25<sup>th</sup> 2014. The Summit committee intends to bring back Katani Sumner to perform, as well as some of the other highly praised parts of the program.

It was asked whether the NHRC can become/join/collaborate with another 501(c)3 organization in town to raise donations. It does not seem to be a viable option, as the NHRC cannot solicit donations. There may be the possibility of making or finding an umbrella 501(c)3 in town which would collaborate with the Diversity Summit Committee, the MLK Day committee, and possibly other committees with similar missions.

### **Needham High School Incident**

The earlier reported incidents at the high school were discussed, including the graffiti on the wall of the school. The committee will try to see if it can contact the school and see if it has anything to share with the committee about its response to the incident.

### **Meeting with James Hugh Powers**

Amelia and Clark Taylor will meet with James Hugh Powers at Chestnut Hollow. They will report back to the committee at its next meeting after their meeting.

### **Annual Town Report**

The NHRC is expected to write a report every year for the annual town report. Sandy Cincotta requested a report from the committee, and Amelia wrote the report for the annual town report for 2013. The report for 2013 has not yet been published. When it is, it will be accessible on the town’s website, under the “publications” section, and then the “annual town reports” section and be delivered to each home in town. The committee was photographed for a photo that will appear with the NHRC report within the 2013 town report.

## **4. New Business**

### **Meeting with Needham Times**

The Needham Times has invited the NHRC and other local groups to an event that it will hold at the library. It will be a meeting during which people will have the opportunity to meet Needham Times staff and to learn about procedures for publicity. The event will be held on **Wednesday, March 26 @ 5pm** at the Needham Public Library. If members would like to attend, please let Amelia know by March 19 so she can RSVP for us. She will send out a follow up reminder.

## **5. Other**

### **Abdul's Letter "Who will win the gold?"**

Abdul sent a letter to the Boston Globe regarding the Olympics. The letter was not published. It was an attempt to preemptively deal with the worst-case scenario, focusing on dissociating Muslims from acts of criminals and terrorists. The letter was published in the American Muslim Magazine. It was suggested that the committee mention the letter at the upcoming meeting with the Needham Times. Amelia will send Abdul's letter to the rest of the committee members for them to read.

### **Group Photo for Annual Report**

The committee was photographed for a picture that will go in the Needham annual town report.

### **Other**

The Immigration Task Force held a very well attended and diverse meeting on January 23, 2014.

**Next Meeting: March 20, 2014**

**Recorder: Ashok**